

I wish to thank the members of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights for the opportunity to appear before you this morning.

As the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior, I am pleased to share the implementation strategies we've recently put into place, which are designed to protect and safeguard Native women from violent crime. In recognizing the severity of the problem, the Department of the Interior has placed a high priority on combating violence against women in tribal communities. While the United States has far to go in this arena, our Department has embarked upon several efforts to address the issue.

The Department fully supported the Tribal Law and Order Act, which was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Obama on July 29, 2010. In the 15 months since the Act became law, the Department has made significant strides in implementing the Act; most notable are the efforts to address some of the jurisdictional concerns, which have undermined efforts to ensure the safety of Native women in tribal communities. While the Tribal Law and Order Act addressed some of the restrictions facing tribal

governments in protecting Native women, we recognize that other barriers must be addressed. In that regard, the Department of the Interior unequivocally echoes the Department of Justice's support of the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act and the proposed amendments (that my colleague from the Department of Justice spoke of).

Our goal is to move towards a comprehensive system designed to eliminate this devastating problem. We have taken important steps to create programs, policies, protocols, and especially trainings which are intended to bring about improved responses to domestic violence. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) is focusing on the following three areas of trainings for 1) BIA Law Enforcement; 2) Victim Witness Advocacy Program and 3) Tribal Courts.

- BIA Law Enforcement Training

In BIA Law Enforcement Training, the BIA Office of Justice Services has initiated and instituted several law enforcement training seminars to specifically address and respond to domestic violence. This core Domestic Violence Course provides insight to the dynamics of

domestic violence, strategies for interviewing the victim, the importance of evidence collection, proper dispatch response, and victim and officer safety. Certified instructors have provided this course at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) to over one hundred and fifty (150) Police officers, corrections officers, and dispatchers, as well as to over ninety (90) Trainers through the FLETC Domestic Violence Train the Trainer program. The new domestic violence training instructs participants how to constructively and effectively intervene and prevent potentially lethal situations.

- BIA Victim Advocacy Program

Secondly, the training for the BIA's Victim Advocacy Program clarifies the duties of victim advocates and the role they play during an investigation. This segment further identifies outside victim-focused resources, and helps to establish a point of contact for connecting with those organizations.

- Tribal Court Training

In the third area, the Tribal Courts Division created a first of its kind tribal court advocacy training in which tribal

judges, prosecutors, and public defenders were trained using a specific domestic violence case fact pattern (There will be 4 more like this in 2012). The BIA Office of Justice Services partnered with tribal prosecutors, the Department of Justice and United States Courts to bring specialized one-on-one training to tribal court personnel. In addition, the training addresses the need for alternative sentencing and probation programs, which may reduce the recidivism of an abuser. Finally, the Tribal Courts Division has entered into partnerships with the University of New Mexico and the University of Alaska to develop state-of-the-art training tools and techniques to assist tribal court judges on issues specific to domestic violence.

In the areas of agency collaboration and tribal consultation, pursuant to the Tribal Law and Order Act, the Department of the Interior has entered into a multi-agency agreement to address Alcohol and Substance Abuse and Prevention in Indian Country. This Memorandum of Agreement sets out the responsibilities and expectations of each agency. We rely heavily on these important collaborations as we look to address some of the contributing factors to high rates of all types of violence on Indian reservations. We acknowledge that much more must be done and we are ready to partner with tribes and federal agencies to look beyond our

current paradigm for what the Department of the Interior can do. As each of our initiatives has benefited from meaningful engagement with tribes, we will continue to work with tribes through formal consultations and extensive planning sessions.

In conclusion, the Department is strongly committed to improving safety in Indian Country. We are also morally obligated to address this issue, because for too long, Native women have been disproportionately victimized by domestic violence. We appreciate the Commission's focus on the safety of Native women and take courage with the strong leadership by our President on this issue as he stated the following during the signing ceremony of the Tribal Law and Order Act, "...when one in three Native American women will be raped in their lifetimes, that is an assault on our national conscience; it is an affront to our shared humanity; it is something that we cannot allow to continue." It is up to all of us to act quickly and decisively because Native women deserve to be safe in their respective communities. Thank you again for the opportunity to address this Commission.

